

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 01024 211854Z

15

ACTION EB-07

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8324

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, UK, FR

SUBJECT: CIVAIR - FIRST COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS BY
CONCORDE - PRESS ROUNDUP

1. SIMULTANEOUS TAKE-OFFS BY BRITISH AIRWAYS AND AIR FRANCE CONCORDES FOR BAHRAIN AND RIO DE JANEIRO AT 11:30 A.M. LONDON TIME JAN. 21 TO BEGIN FIRST COMMERCIAL SERVICES BY A SUPER-SONIC TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT PROVIDED OCCASION FOR ROAD PRESS COVERAGE OF THE 14-YEAR OLD TWO BILLION DOLLAR CONCORDE PROGRAM.
 2. MORE THOUGHTFUL REPORTS, THE TIMES EDITORIAL - "THE WONDERS AND THE FOLLY" AND THE GUARDIAN 10-PAGE SPECIAL - "EAGLE OR ALBATROSS", WHILE APPLAUDING THE TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENT OF THE JOINT UK/FRENCH AEROSPACE INDUSTRIES IN PRODUCING THE FIRST COMMERCIAL SST CALLED ATTENTION TO THE SERIOUS FLAWS IN THE PROJECT. THE TIMES NOTED "...INSTEAD OF MORE PEOPLE BEING CARRIED FASTER AT LESS COST, CONCORDE CARRIES FEWER PEOPLE FASTER AT MORE COST. IN CONCORDE ONLY ONE FACTOR OF THE EQUATION IS RIGHT." NEVERTHELESS, THE TIMES STATES "...IT IS RIGHT THAT THIS BRILLIANT BUT INHERENTLY UN-ECONOMIC AIRCRAFT SHOULD BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO FULFILL ITS NECESSARILY LIMITED PURPOSE." THE EDITORIAL
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PAGE 02 LONDON 01024 211854Z

ENDS WITH THE STATEMENT "...CONCORDE FLIES BEYOND THE

LAW OF DIMINISHING RETURNS AND CAN THEREFORE BE NOTHING MORE THAN A SPLENDID SPECTACLE AND A DREADFUL WARNING."

3. THE FINANCIAL TIMES PRODUCED A 15-PAGE SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT OPENING WITH AN ARTICLE ENTITLED "BOON TO MANKIND OR A NOISY NUISANCE?". FT'S AIR CORRESPONDENT TOOK A GENERALLY OPTIMISTIC VIEW THAT COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS BY CONCORDE WILL PROVE ITS ACCEPTABILITY TO THE PUBLIC AND LAY THE SPECTRE OF THE AIRCRAFT AS A "...NOISY, FEARSOME, POLLUTING MONSTER THAT MANY HAVE CLAIMED IT TO BE...". OTHER FT ARTICLES WENT INTO DETAIL ON ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE AIRCRAFT AND ITS OPERATION.

4. THE DAILY EXPRESS AND JOURNAL OF COMMERCE (LIVERPOOL) GAVE FRONT-PAGE HEADLINE COVERAGE TO THE FIRST FLIGHTS. THEY AND OTHERS RECALLED RECENT AVIATION WEEK AND TIME MAGAZINE ARTICLES FAVORABLE TO CONCORDE, THE EXPRESS CALLED THE FORMER "...A PAT ON THE NOSE" FOR THE AIRCRAFT AND IN AN EDITORIAL DECRIED THE FACT THAT NEW YORK "...HAS TURNED ITS BACK ON PROGRESS BY REFUSING TOMORROW'S PLANE."

5. DETAILED COVERAGE OF US/DOT HEARINGS IN SEVERAL PAPERS WERE FACTUAL AND UNEMOTIONAL AND MOST COMMENTED ON THE FAIRNESS WITH WHICH THE HEARINGS WERE CONDUCTED. THE RECENT PROPOSAL BY EPA WHICH WOULD LIMIT CONCORDE SERVICE TO THE U.S. TO ONLY THE FIRST TWO AIRCRAFT PRODUCED WAS CRITICIZED IN SEVERAL REPORTS. ARTICLES GENERALLY POINTED OUT THAT WHATEVER THE U.S. DECISION AT THE END OF JANUARY LITIGATION WHICH WILL PROBABLY FOLLOW IT COULD PREVENT CONCORDE LANDINGS IN THE U.S. FOR SOME TIME,

6. ONE PAPER (THE TIMES) IN AN ARTICLE BY ITS AVIATION CORRESPONDENT VOICED THE OPINION THAT A QUALIFIED ACCEPTANCE OF CONCORDE BY THE U.S. (DULLES AIRPORT ONLY OR DULLES FOR A TRIAL PERIOD) WOULD NOT BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE BRITISH OR FRENCH. HOWEVER, TWO OTHERS (FINANCIAL TIMES AND GUARDIAN) NOTED THAT IT APPEARS THE UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 LONDON 01024 211854Z

U.S. DECISION WILL MOST LIKELY BE A COMPROMISE ALONG THE LINES NOTED ABOVE. NEITHER OF THESE COMMENTED ADVERSELY ON SUCH AN OUTCOME OF THE DOT HEARINGS.

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